

EDITORIAL

We're number one! Hooray

It turns out that an Illinois Republican's stunt in March that aimed to get support for a state sales tax holiday seems depressingly appropriate right now. In protest of a new one percent sales tax in Cook County, some state lawmakers whipped out big foam No. 1 fingers and sarcastically highlighted what some called the highest tax burden in the nation.

But according to a report last week, Illinois has a distinction that no one should be celebrating: the worst pension debt in the nation.

While the gap between what the state owes and what the state can

pay grows ever larger, more than just state employees have something to be very afraid of. Every Illinoisan who uses state services looks to be harmed.

Instead of making tough decisions decades ago, lawmakers decided to merely put off the problem. Relying on future generations to clean up one of the biggest financial messes in the country is cowardly and really gives a whole new meaning to the phrase "passing the buck."

But since it's unlikely every state employee will ever retire at once, this is not a ticking time bomb situation. At the moment, it seems more

comparable to a black hole that's growing bigger.

After adjusting for interest and other creative accounting measures, Illinois still has to pay \$5 billion a year to the pension funds just to keep the debt from rising.

That money has to come from somewhere, and recently, it has come at the expense of higher education support, health care payments and infrastructure improvements. But more often, it's just not coming.

The result is a state that can't take care of its employees or itself. While it's not surprising that

Our Opinion

Editorials represent the majority opinion of The Daily Illini Editorial Board, whose members are Steve Contorno, editor in chief; Kathleen Foody, assignment editor; Andrew Mason, opinions editor; Meghan Montemurro, assistant assignment editor; Wes Anderson, copy chief.

the current group of lawmakers in Springfield prefer to tackle glamorous initiatives in education and health care (or do nothing at all), they should realize that they could do a lot to improve those issues' long-term prospects by getting the pension debt under control and responsibly paying down the bill.

Otherwise, no lawmaker will even be able to afford to buy foam fingers. Although by then, the more appropriate hand gesture will be a big thumbs down.

EDITORIAL CARTOON

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Readers' opinions

The Daily Illini reserves the right to edit or reject any contributions. Summer letters must be limited to 200 words. Contributions must be typed and include the author's name, address and phone number.

University students must include their year in school and college.

Inquiries about possible guest columns should be submitted to opinions editor Andrew Mason via e-mail or by calling 217.337.8366.

Mail: Opinions, The Daily Illini, 512 E. Green St., Champaign, IL 61820.

E-mail: opinions@dailyillini.com with the subject "Letter to the Editor."

Twitter dee and Twitter dumb

God knows there are tons of networking Web sites taking the internet (and our social lives) by storm: MySpace, FaceBook, Friendster, Jobster, Homester, Familyster, MySpaceBook, FaceSpace, MyFaceSter; the list is endless. Basically if you combine a place (home, school, work) or a relationship (friend, family, stalker) with the suffix "-ster," "-space," or "-book," you are bound to find a networking opportunity.

A more recent addition to this steadily growing list of sites is Twitter - an exception to the previous naming rule. The site is crafted around a single question: What are you doing right now? As far as I know, this is the only thing you can do with a Twitter profile.

I find the whole idea of service like this entirely disconcerting. People already take their MySpace top friends listings seriously (I'm sure that somewhere out there, a relationship has ended over another guy knocking a boyfriend into the number two spot). Others exploit their Facebook status messages in order to broadcast their up-to-the-minute feelings to their entire friends list ("So-and-so is feeling sad and wishes someone would cheer me up..."). What is the allure in knowing what someone else does every minute of the day?

Imagine the messages:

"I'm eating breakfast. I sure love me that Special K!"

"At the grocery store! I buy milk!"

"I shouldn't have eaten that two-week-old seafood for dinner! Going to the bathroom now! Will update from hospital if I have food poisoning!"

As things stand, I have never heard of offices using this site for co-workers, and I don't think anyone would want their family or friends to know what they happen to do



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at any given moment. Twitter advertises that the service is as informative as you want it to be. You can update very infrequently, or turn off updates by certain people. Okay, great; but if you don't want to display your whole life like the Truman Show or ignore people, why would you use the service to begin with?

As fun as it could be to obnoxiously use Twitter for purposes of personal humor, we've developed yet another outlet for our secret inclination toward social exhibitionism. We're so starved for our fifteen minutes of Internet fame that we imagine that broadcasting our every move will interest someone, anyone, enough that they will continue to read. Between Internet networking and blogging, everyone and their mother - often quite literally - crave that acknowledgment, whether in Web site hits or comments.

As a response, I'm working on my own project. I'd like to combine the personal information of Facebook profiles and the University's Find People online search, the visual broadcasting aspect of YouTube and the constant status update capabilities of Twitter. That way, people can find out who you are, see exactly where you are, and read/watch what you're doing at any given moment.

I'm calling it "House Arrest."